

Amnesty International Stratford upon Avon Group
37 Maidenhead Road, Stratford upon Avon
www.amnesty.org.uk/stratfordonavon
October 10th, 2012, 7.30

Present: Penny Freedman (Temporary Chair), Kathy Stredder (Secretary), Sonya Millman (Treasurer), Philip Morris, John McDermott, Sarah O'Grady, Elspeth Baillie, Maryann Dobbin, Rosie Keep, Linda Butland, Jo Pettitt

Apologies: Penny Young, Abeer El-Sayed, Chris Boylan, Eileen Alberti

Minutes: The Minutes of the September meeting were accepted.

Monthly Action: The Group agreed to send letters of appeal to the Prime Minister, the Senior Vice-Minister, and the Prosecutor-General of Japan with regard to Hakamada Iwao, who has been on death row for 44 years, despite an unsafe conviction. New forensic tests have strengthened the case for a retrial which is the focus of the appeal.

Secretary's Report:

Ralph Braunholtz (Wythall Group) has written to update us on the progress of the AGM resolution on Asylum Seekers. He is still waiting to hear from the Amnesty Board member who is responsible for seeing through this resolution.

There will be a Picture House screening of "Call me Kuchu" on the 6th of November at 6.15. The film is a documentary about David Kato and the issue of homophobia in Kampala, Uganda. Members indicated they would be interested in attending; Rosie offered to liaise with the Picturehouse contact about this.

Evelyn Ho has sent a copy of her report for the Methodist Church Bulletin on Human Trafficking. It reports widespread evidence of this problem in the UK. Ask Kathy for a copy. (There will be a bazaar in the Methodist Hall, 3rd November, 2 – 4).

Saturday, October 13th – 1.45 p.m at Victoria House, Willes Road, Leamington, CV32 4PT. A meeting of Warwickshire Amnesty members with invited guests Kate Allen, talking about changes within Amnesty, and local representatives in discussion about the issue of asylum. Members are urged to attend this important meeting.

Saturday, October 13th there will be a flag day/collection at Budgen's in Bidford. Kathy and Eileen to help. Heather Gerrard is the organiser.

Saturday, October 13th – Stop the Trafficking day conference, 9.30 – 2.00, St. Andrew's Centre, Shotton. £10 with lunch. Contact Val Clark on 01451 830684.

Wednesday, November 14th (Meeting House) – Invited speaker – Dr Trevor Trueman – "*No welcome in the Horn: refugee experiences in Djibouti and Somaliland*". Trevor was

a big success last year when he first spoke to us. Please come and welcome Trevor.

Treasurer's Report – Accounts for the 9 months ended 30.9/12

- Sonya advised that, in the 3 months since 30 June, the group had received income of £30 and paid expenses of £20, resulting in funds at 30 September of £1,013.
- The accounts to 31 December 2012 will be presented at the AGM in March 2013 and will include the October street collection income as well as the group's share of any profit from our Poetry Festival event. She plans to contribute more funds to Amnesty before the end of the year.
- In order to calculate the final 2012 group donation that can be made, Sonya will first need to prepare a budget for 2013 showing each month's estimated receipts and payments. She asked that people bring ideas to the November meeting of fund-raising events for 2013. They will need to provide an estimate of the likely expenses and projected income of each event so that the numbers can be included in the budget.

Report on Amnesty Event 'The Dangerous New Way of Fighting War'

Maryann outlined Professor Paul Roger's talk aimed at explaining the increasing use of drones in military conflict. The meeting was organised by the Malvern Amnesty Group on September 26th. The origins and developing use of the 'drone' in the context of the potential abuse of human rights and international legislation was explored. Members thanked Maryann for her excellent report.

Campaigns: Individuals at Risk

- Elspeth invited members to sign up for the *Write for Rights* (Greetings Card Campaign) stall on Saturday, December 8th. The stall will require at least 8 helpers, 2 per session (of one and a half hours each). Contact Elspeth Baillie: emb@mansillshouse.co.uk. Kathy to obtain licence.
- The October (30th) letter writing morning will be overseen by Rosie; the November (27) morning will be overseen by Penny F.

Amnesty UK Workers' Strike

John reported on the strike of Amnesty workers in protest at a senior management proposal to cut £2.5 million from the budget. Amnesty UK is not facing a financial crisis – there has been 2% year-on-year growth in spite of the global recession – the cuts are proposed because of a decision to significantly increase the financial contribution to Amnesty's International HQ. To date senior management has refused to engage in negotiations with Unite, the union representing the striking workers. John read from a Unite press release which stated, 'We have serious concerns that the proposed cuts threaten Amnesty's future. We fully support Amnesty's growth in the global south and the need to invest in that growth, but it makes no financial sense to make wide-ranging cuts to a thriving branch of the organisation. Failure to invest in a successful Amnesty section doesn't just let down Amnesty UK's hard-working staff, it lets down the dedicated members who invest through annual subscriptions, donations and activism.'

John then quoted from a letter from Kate Allen sent to all Amnesty groups and seeking to justify the proposal, ‘The highest decision making body of the Amnesty Movement, the International Council Meeting, made decisions on how much national sections like Amnesty UK should contribute and how quickly this should rise to increase Amnesty’s work in the global south. The Board of Amnesty UK will abide by ICM decisions.’

Sarah, a Board member, then expanded on the argument made by Kate Allen, emphasising that this had been a very difficult decision to reach and that the Board had great respect for Amnesty’s workers and were anxious to treat them fairly, but the overriding concern was to expand Amnesty’s ‘on the ground’ work in the global south and this could only be achieved by increasing Amnesty’s financial contribution to the international HQ in the manner decided by the ICM. Sarah added that the SMT would present its recommendation to the Board on 20th October and staff would be consulted on 25th October. However, she added that adoption of the recommendation was inevitable and that, sadly, there would have to be compulsory redundancies.

John proposed a vote on sending a message of support to the striking workers in their call for meaningful negotiations with senior management. A clear majority voted in favour.

Amnesty Training

- 3rd November, Warwick University – Amnesty is organising a school speaker training event. Kathy to find out more and let Penny F and Elspeth know. Contact Kathy for more information.
- Amnesty Workshop, “Adequate Housing – a right not a privilege” is a new offering. Members agreed to consider inviting a trainer/workshop as a part of next year’s programme.

Fundraising

- Kathy thanked those members who volunteered their time for the 6th October Street Collection which raised £246.
- The 2012 Amnesty Shop Catalogue is out. Amnesty Groups receive a 20% discount off the retail price for orders over £75. Please let Kathy or Eileen know if you wish to place an order (xmas cards/presents) – by October 31st.

AOB

- Jo offered to organise the carol singing this year; it was agreed; the date to be decided.
- Rosie reported that she had googled Stratford Amnesty and found Jo’s address at Broad Walk. She expressed concern that this should be altered but had not yet found a way of doing so.

Dates for your diary

Tuesday, October 30th - letter writing morning at The Falcon Hotel (10 – 12)

Wednesday, October 31st – deadline for Amnesty Shop orders to be placed with

Kathy/Eileen.

Saturday, 3rd November – Warwick University – Amnesty school speaker training day.

Tuesday, 6th November, 6.15 p.m., The Stratford Picturehouse – Film “Call me Kuchu” For info on the film and venue details please see:
http://www.picturehouses.co.uk/film/Call_Me_Kuchu/

Wednesday, November 14th 7.30 (Meeting House) – Invited speaker – Dr Trevor Trueman – *“No welcome in the Horn: refugee experiences in Djibouti and Somaliland”*

Tuesday, November 27th - letter writing morning at The Falcon Hotel (10-12)

Saturday, December 8th, 9.30 – 3.30, The Corn Market Greetings Card Campaign stall

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